Interview with

MARGARET ANN ROSE

At Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center

Harkers Island, North Carolina

Ann Rose holding photograph of father, Ira Lewis, in front of her Harkers Island Past and Present Collection at the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center

Interviewed by Eva Leasure on July 10, 2024

Transcribed by Eva Leasure

Down East Change

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Date of Interview: July 10, 2024
Location: Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center, Harkers Island
Interviewer: Eva Leasure
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Eva Leasure: This is Eva Leasure, it is July 10, 2024, and this is the Changes Down East project. With me today is Margaret Ann Rose: Margaret Ann Rose and we are at the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center on Harkers Island. Okay, so, our first question is just more introductory: When were you born, where were you born, and where did you grow up?

MAR: I was born December 20, 1942, at Staten Island, New York, because that was the only military hospital that served my father, who was in the Coast Guard, and I grew up on the south shore of Long Island, primarily because that's where his lifeboat stations were located, and we lived fairly close to where he was stationed for convenience, until I was sixteen years old, when he retired in 1959, August 1.

EL: So can you talk more about who were your parents, where were they from, and what did they do for a living?

MAR: Okay. My father was Ira Lewis, he was born and raised on Harkers Island. He fished and clammed until about – he was born 1918, and he did that until about 1938, when he just got tired of not being able to make any money, he saw how poor his father was from having that type of lifestyle, and said to himself, "There's got to be something better for me and my family, whenever I have a family." So he found a friend who was stationed on Long Island, who was originally from Atlantic, North Carolina, Down East, and he heard that he was home to see family, so he got in touch in some kind of way with him, and says "I want to bum a ride back to Long Island, New York, 'cause I've got a brother that's already stationed up there, and I want to see if I can enlist in the Coast Guard." Now Mama was also from Harkers Island, and they sort of went to school – they were in school at the same time together, 'cause Daddy said he fell in love with her when he was seven years old—whatever! [laughter] And she… her mother died when she was five years old. And her ten year old sister had to raise herself, an eight year old brother, Mama who was five years old, and then a younger brother who was two years old. So she was pretty much living there in the old homeplace, her father was still living, but her older sister had gotten married to Dad's brother. So Mama was still there, living in the household with sort of a new upcoming family, and Dad would come back to Harkers Island from the Coast Guard whenever he can and sort of dated her in between. And about 1940, he proposed to her. Believe it or not, down on the shore, what time they were having a wake for someone who had died on the main road! [laughter]

EL: [laughter]

MAR: So, what a unique place to propose to a future wife! So she said yes, and they got married, and he took her back to Long Island, New York with him, and then I was born two years later in 1942.

EL: Wow. So where were their homeplaces?

MAR: Dad's homeplace is at a section of the Island called Red Hill. When you're coming around that sharp curve after you've passed Seaside Restaurant, over to the left – I mean, over to the right, there's a

little lane called Lily Bell Lane, that is Dad's sister. But you go down in there and maybe three or four hundred feet to the left, where that road stops, is where the old homeplace was. But all that area was wooded – you couldn't see the shore, and the old houses, back in those days, there was so much wooded land. Now Mama was raised, right now where the entrance to the Harkers Island Fishing Center is located, there was the old homeplace there, if you'll notice in that area there was a big old oak tree. And there might be a little post in the ground that indicates there was a septic tank there. That's where her old homeplace was located, and that's where she grew up.

EL: Wow. Oh my gosh.

MAR: Uh-huh. And it really was an effort for the people who lived to the west end of the Island, which they called Red Hill, the land was higher, to go visit or even court someone who lived further down the Island – it was almost like there was two separate communities, the East'ard and the West'ard. Because you had to walk it, you know. And the roads didn't come along until later, and they were shelly and hard and most of the people didn't really have good shoes so lots of the time you had to go barefooted, and that hot sand, you know, so it was a chore

EL: [laughter]

MAR: to even walk a mile or two, or even three, sometimes they'd have to walk that far to see each other.

EL: Oh my gosh.

MAR: Mm-hmm.

EL: Wow. So I've read in your collection that you visited in the summer time to – you visited Harkers Island.

MAR: Mm-hmm.

EL: Can you briefly talk about what you remember most from your visits to the Island?

MAR: Early on, during Dad's early days at the Coast Guard, we didn't get a chance to visit every summer, maybe every two or three years? I remembered the difference in… first, I lived in Long Island, just about everyone in our community had electricity, bathroom and running water—and a car, at least one car. But here on the Island, that wasn't so. We would come to visit relatives, we would stay at the same homeplace where Mama grew up, 'cause that's where her sister was living. And they only had, maybe one bedroom downstairs and an upstairs attic. But she, at that time, I think she had electricity, but she didn't have a bathroom. And she didn't have inside running water. There was a hand pump on the back porch, and you had to go there, winter or summer, and pump your water then bring it in and heat it up on a kerosene stove. And of course with no bathroom that means no shower. No such thing as a tub bath or a shower. Those were the two striking differences between when I lived in New York and down here. And then Mama had some older aunts, that she would take me with her, by the hand

EL: [laughter]

MAR: and go visit her aunts, and some of them didn't have electricity. Or much less, a bathroom and running water. As a matter of fact, I learned later on that my husband, his mother, all she had was an outdoor hand pump, and when my husband figured out a way to bring the hand pump inside the house,

she was so elated she, you know, danced a jig! So the lack of those basics that we take for granted was a drastic difference. And I noticed too a lot of the older ladies, while they didn't smoke cigarettes, they used snuff. The men would smoke the cigarettes, Camels unfiltered [laughter] and the old – the really old ladies used snuff, and when you'd be talking to them, they'd have that little stick sticking out of the corner of their mouth and a little bit of snuff juice on their chin. And when they would go outside, not having running water, they would wear these slap bonnets – I think we might have one of those here in our exhibits – so they wouldn't get sun in their face. They knew more about the effects of sun than maybe we do these days! So I saw a lot of old women with the slap bonnets. Now I never saw that up in New York. They'd lay out in the sun and roast! [laughter]

EL: [laughter]

MAR: Okay. But that's the primary difference.

EL: Okay. And what did you typically do during your visits?

MAR: [laughter] I probably aggravated my poor aunt to death!

EL: [laughter]

MAR: I'd love to go swimming. Up in New York, my girlfriend's mother would either take us to the beach, to the ocean to go swimming, or we had a lake there. So when I come down, I'd want to go swimming down in the sound! Just right back of the house. And then come to the house, pull off a sandy, wet bathing suit for my poor aunt and Mama to figure out how to get them rinsed out and put on the clothesline, so… going swimming was my main thing that I loved to do. And let's see, now we'd go to church on Sunday, we'd always be here at least one Sunday through that week, I'd love to go to church 'cause the church that Daddy's father and brother were charter members of had wonderful singers. Oh, I loved to hear those people sing! And even that tradition, it exists today, Free Grace Church on Ferry Dock Road. So I'd love to hear that singing, and it motivated me to want to learn how to play the piano, like Miss Reva Pearl did! So going to church, and going swimming was my two things that I loved.

EL: Oh my goodness. And so, I've heard that there were a lot of stores and businesses around Ferry Dock Road, that that was where kind of all the action was?

MAR: It was considered the middle of the Island, and there was a – where the vacant lot is now where Captain's Choice Restaurant used to be and burned down – there was a store that had a corner there, and that—I think Wayne Davis's daddy run that little store, 'cause Wayne Davis's parents' house was next to that. And so that was one store, and a lot of people, they would take – you've seen those little storage buildings people have in their backyards now to put their gardens tools in? Well, they would build something like that in their front yard, over to the side, right near the road, and sell just some very very basic staples, like canned beans, canned milk, jelly, dill pickles, molasses, flour, just the very very basics, no fresh fruit or no fresh vegetables, because you really couldn't grow things like that very well on the Island because the soil was so poor. The soil on the mainland was completely different, and those people would grow stuff there, come over on the ferry, and sell stuff on the Island. So there was a lot of little stores, and then also, across from that store that I mentioned that Wayne Davis's daddy owned, there was another store across there—the shell of that building is still there today, where Fish Hook is located—but I've got a picture of that, when Filmore and Mabel owned that store – she was a native Islander, and he was a native Otwayer, and they ran – they had like a little pool table in there for the

young people, and whatever. And then also, across the street from that adjacent corner, there's a tall house there now, there used to be a theater. And as a matter of fact, I think there was another theater, a second theater, either in the place of where Filmore and Mabel's store was or right behind it, but in that area – there was two theaters within walking distance of each other! Then down near where the Baptist church is now, there was a little tiny restaurant there, they called it a café, it wasn't much bigger than those little storage buildings, they would sell hotdogs, hamburgers, milkshakes, that was it. And then there was another store, before you get to the post office, between Midway and the post office, to the right, and there was… oh, what did they call it… David's Café. That's where I met my husband. They would have a jukebox, they played the songs, you might – I don't know if they sold hotdogs or hamburgers, but probably milkshakes. But milkshakes, drinks, moon pies, that kind of thing. And the jukebox. And the post office was not where it is now. That was down the Ferry Dock Road where Fish Hook Restaurant is now, and that adjacent corner, that little narrow road that leads to Harkers Island Fishing Center, that was not there. At the very, very beginning there was a tiny store down there that my grandfather and his brother ran. They called the Billy Joe Store. And then – it was right near the shoreline, so if anybody coming with their fishing boats needed to go up there and get any food they could—whatever. Then later on, that was turned into a post office. Believe it or not. There's a picture of that in the post office here on the Island. If you go in there, it shows a lady – I think that's my mother, but I'm not sure – and a couple of cars, next to this old, old building, that was the Billy Joe Store that later turned into a post office, and that was where the people would go get their mail. And then later on, they moved that store up to – okay, where I mentioned a few minutes ago about the – where the old homeplace was for my mother? To the left of that was a wooden building – that was the second store that my grandfather and his brother opened up. And that eventually turned into a post office! [laughter]

EL: [laughter]

MAR: And so the third post office is where it is now.

EL: Okay.

MAR: But the first two were those locations. There wasn't that much store activity at the east end of the Island. It seemed to be congregated right in that central part, where I mentioned where Wayne's daddy's store was—two theaters, the Mabel and Filmore store, the Billy Joe store up on the road. Now 1960, Billy's Store that's there now? His daddy—he was from Beaufort, he married an Island woman—he opened up a store, a little bit to the left of where that store is now, it was wooden, 'cause my aunt, when we'd come home to visit, she'd say, "Mama" – or Maggie, that was my mother's name – we gotta walk over here, I've got to show you this new store, that Don's husband's opened up. And so she took us on a tour of that store. But that has since been torn down and then the cement block one was built. But that was half the size back then than it is now. Was it the late 1990s? It was after a hurricane came and messed up another building out here that they expanded that. And there was probably a few more store… In my album that I wrote, *Harkers Island Past and Present*, I think I've got a section in there where the old stores, the names of them, who ran them, and right now some of them are evading my mind, as far as their location, but everything seemed to be from about where – Oh! The Myrtle Yeomans' café. That was after you pass Billy's Store, where the road curves slightly to the left, she had – her homeplace was there, and she had a café – she could make a good hamburger and hotdog. That one, and then further down was that other little store where Faye Nelson Kirkland had a little café. Then

from there on, it seemed like there wasn't much of anything, as far as stores. The school wasn't even there – that was 1957 before that school was ever built. The school, prior to that, was to the property where the Lighthouse Chapel is located now, to the left of that big open field in front of their parsonage, that was where the main school was located. And the picture of the entire school body that's up there under "Schools" [in her collection], was in that field. Cape Lookout Drive did not exist except for maybe three or four hundred feet up the way. And it stopped, 'cause if you notice the position of some of the older houses there, you'll say, "Well, why are they facing that way and not with the road?" Because the old road didn't exist the way the new one does now. And then even when you go further past Dollar General – that first road past Dollar General, Willis Street, that was a dirt road, and there was only one house on the corner, and the road went back in there and stopped where Cape Lookout Drive goes—zips past it now, and then it turned a little bit to the left, and my cousin lived down there, and another man across the street, 'cause that house is sort of shaped—and that's where that stopped. Cape Lookout Drive didn't go any further than that. So that gives you an idea – I mean I remember when there was only one road on Harkers Island, that was the main road, there was no Cape Lookout Drive, there was no Bayview Drive, no Diamond City Drive, none of these little cross roads between Diamond City and Cape Lookout. And Guthrie's Street, by the Mormon Church, made a right onto what is now Bayview Drive, and stopped about three or four houses down. 'Cause there's a house down there now, Byron Willis's, we owned that at one time—and that's where the road stopped. And the rest of it was just a sandy dirt road for about a mile. And some people who loved to fly airplanes would land their planes in there. [laughter]

EL: Oh my gosh!

MAR: My brother-in-law would do that… So that gives you an idea of the store situation, very few, because there was limited roadways to put stores.

EL: Wow. So do you remember when Cape Lookout Drive was developed?

MAR: Let's see… When Daddy retired in 1959, he built a house on Cape Lookout Drive, so sometime in the mid-1950s, probably, is when they extended that road down, 'cause that's where he lived, that's where he built his house, that house that's up on a hill on Cape Lookout Drive, that gray one that's up on that big hill

EL: I love that house.

MAR: That was Mama and Daddy's—my parents' house. I lived there until I got married.

EL: That's a beautiful house.

MAR: Yeah. Daddy painted it green, would not change the color, and after he died we sold it—one of the first things they did was change the color to gray! [laughter] So that was when… probably the mid-1950s, someone who lived here during those years—'cause see, we didn't move back until 1959, so people living here prior to that would probably be able to say a more exact date when that road was finally connected and came back to the main Island Road.

EL: And do you know when Bayview Drive was put in?

MAR: Bayview Drive… We had already moved out there, let's see—Bayview Drive, the paved part, stopped at Byron Willis's house—okay, you turn onto Bayview Drive, then there's Nelson Street – that

wasn't even there, that was just a little roadway – and then there was about two or three houses past that, and that's where Bayview Drive, the paved portion, stopped. There was a dirt road that went all the way down to what is now Yeomans Street. And it stopped. And we—my husband got it in his mind that he wanted to build boats in the backyard, I said, "Leslie, there's not enough room in our—the back of this lot, they're only 120 feet deep, there's no room for a boathouse," well I said, "I'm gonna go down this dirt road and see if there's a place that's on the water that you can build a boathouse and build boats." So, we lived down there at least ten years? Ten to fifteen years before they ever paved that.

EL: Wow.

MAR: So that—and we moved out there in 1967… I'd say it was probably the late 70s, close to 1980, before they paved that, and then that's when I think they probably extended it further on down, and I'm not sure exactly when Diamond City Drive was paved or even created. But after that happened, then it grew quickly, because a lot of people who were my age group were needing a place to stay, the old homeplaces on the shoreline were being – parents were dying, they were being sold—so that grew quickly. The people that live there now are pretty much in my age group. So I would say, late 70s to early 80s, that Bayview Drive was paved. And possibly Diamond City sometime not too far behind that.

EL: Did you say that the late 70s and early 80s was when the waterfront started to be sold, all the old homeplaces?

MAR: Yes… I remember when we first moved here… The last few years before we moved here for good, we managed to make two trips down to the Island, maybe within a year or so of each other. And best I can remember, there was only one or two houses at the east end of the Island that was owned by a non-native. And then gradually… I think what happened was that some of those people that had those houses, well, they would bring their children down, whatever, well the children would grow up – "Well, I went with Granddaddy or Daddy, whatever, to Harkers Island—I love that place, I'm gonna get me a place down there!" 'Cause I'm running into people, with my small business – they are grandchildren of people who came here forty, fifty years ago, and a lot of childhood memories are here, so they're coming back to either visit or buy. So, I would say probably in the mid-80s, for *sure*, people started buying up land, 'cause Daddy told me, best that he could remember, during the 1920s or 30s, the names of every family that lived along the shoreline. It was eighty-something families. And now we are lucky to find ten who are native that still live along the shoreline. But they had to live along the shoreline because their occupation was fishing. And it made sense to have your house along the shore where you could see your boat, keep watch on your boat, 'cause anything happens to your boat, there's your livelihood, gone. But now there's… maybe six months to a year I rode the full length of the Island, really slow, looking at every house along the Island, I said, "Not a native…not a native…I *think* they're a native but I'm not sure…" I was lucky to come up with twelve. It's probably less than that now.

EL: Wow.

MAR: So, the non-native population now is beginning to exceed the native.

EL: When did that start happening, that it started to shift – more people from off than on?

MAR: It started, gradually, I think in the 80s, and it has accelerated.

EL: Okay.

MAR: Each decade it has accelerated, and especially in the last fifteen – Sorry, I thought somebody was knocking—especially in the last fifteen years or so. 'cause right now a house can come on the market—there was a house behind my daughter, the lady died, the daughter put the house up for sale, and in less than a week, it was sold…by a man who was already from away from here, and had bought some land at the other, the west end of the Island. He already had a place there. I think there's – I have the feeling there are people who are just sitting and going, "What's for sale on Harkers Island, that's where I want to be—I can go to Barden's Inlet, I can go to the Cape and go fishing, it's a low crime community, it's not a cookie-cutter subdivision like I see everywhere else, the people are pretty good people, they got Christian ideals, they'll treat you right if you treat them right," And it's – there's an attraction there. There is an attraction. So, right now, I think we're probably at least fifty to fifty-five percent non-native, and probably lucky to have forty-five to fifty percent native population, or related to natives.

EL: And where do a lot of the natives live?

MAR: Well, some of them, if they didn't have land that their parents left to them, or they couldn't buy out the rest of the siblings to get the parents' land, they've had to move to the mainland. 'Cause at that time, say, fifteen, twenty years ago, that land on the mainland was cheaper than land on the Island. But now the people on the mainland who own property are starting to catch on—"Ah! There's a demand for our property, if Harkers Islanders can get that much for ours, we're going to up our price!" So now it's going to get to the place it's going to be hard to find affordable land on the mainland. And some of these people, if they are eligible, are having to move into apartments in Beaufort.

EL: Wow. So it's an exodus from Down East?

MAR: There's a few Down East communities they maybe can move but some of your Down East communities have difficulty getting the land perked because they're so low, like Stacy, parts of Sea Level, Atlantic's pretty high, but Stacy in particular is very low and portions of Davis in a hurricane… I mean, a lot of them had their houses ruined in Hurricane Florence and one or two other hurricanes prior to that, because it's low. So, some people who don't know any better, from off [laughter] are buying that land not realizing what they're going to have to face with a major hurricane. And 'course, a real estate agent is not going to be too eager to let them know that, you know? [laughter] They need a good sale, you know! So, but, native people know the communities that aren't going to be ideal to live. And then, too, as they are getting older, they're going to need to be closer to their doctors, they're gravitating more towards Beaufort and Morehead City and getting an apartment there where they can be closer to the doctors.

EL: I'd be interested to talk more about hurricanes – so is there a pretty big difference between the experience of a hurricane on Harkers Island versus these other communities?

MAR: I would say so, 'cause Daddy and my husband has sort of explained it to me. Daddy always says, when the water comes rushing in, around Harkers Island, now you might get some flooding, but the water will, like – on the east end, if it comes across Core Banks, Core Sound, it—probably the east end of Harkers Island will get it the worst, but then the water can go around the Island. But you can take Marshallberg and those little communities north of us, when it comes across Core Sound, and goes up those creeks, it has no place to go except up! So, further up those creeks you go, the greater chance of having your homes flooded. But, so Daddy always said that Harkers Island was the safest place to live. Even though I had a lot of high tide with Hurricane Florence, my house – it didn't go in my house. It

came close! [laughter] But it didn't go in it. But I think that's because of that fact that the water had a place to go, it could go around both sides, and then work its ways up these other places.

EL: Wow. And I think… it's interesting to talk more about when you moved to the Island from Long Island—what was it like living on the Island full-time as opposed to Long Island, and I know you talked about, kind of, differences in amenities—were there other, strong differences that you noticed in the island cultures?

MAR: Well, let's see… The people were comical! [laughter] Friendly, comical, cracking jokes, and I had to start learning the way that they would talk in negatives. Like Jamie and Houston [Lewis], video mentioned there that Houston said his wife, who was from Virginia, never could—took her twenty years to figure out what the negatives mean, like, you know, you go to your porch, and it's thundering and lightening, "This is a pretty time," you know?

EL: [laughter]

MAR: So, it took me awhile to learn that! But, that was unique, you didn't hear that up in Long Island. People just said, flat-out – a lot of them were not that colorful, people down here were colorful. [laughter] And I enjoyed being around them, you know. And let's see, what did we do… well, we would just—a couple of girl had cars, one of them had a car, her own one, and other one just drove her daddy's car, we would drive, however many would fit in the car, seatbelts weren't required then, so we'd pack in four, five, or six in the car, ride over to Atlantic Beach, there was a radio station that would play the current popular songs, and you could park in the parking lot, Domell's, was it Domell's? I think it was—and you could call up there and say, "Play this song, this is from So-and -So to So-and-So," and, you know, some way of courting indirectly, you know? [laughter] Or go to any of the little roadside cafes on the Island that had a jukebox, and you'd just park outside, and you'd hang out the window of the car, you know, the girls might hang out of the car, and a guy, or if she had a car, the guy would walk over to her car, hang out at the window, talk, go ahead and play the music, you know, drink milkshakes and play music! Go to the theater, maybe. Nothing exciting, but [laughter] it's more than we've got now! A whole lot more than we've got now – we don't have anything now for the young people at all! No little place for them to sort of hang out!

EL: When did all that start to go away?

MAR: Well, I guess, maybe… the people who had the little storefronts, when they got enough age on them that they passed away, and the land got sold, I guess whoever bought that house either tore down that little storefront thing or moved it in the backyard and used it to store garden tools. Possibly, that's just, you know… something I hadn't really thought about, but that was a possibility. And then too, see, Billy's Store, there was another store, where the Ramsey Center is located now, what his name… okay, Randy Ramsey's daddy operated a store there, it had a little bit of groceries, little bit of houseware, lot of stuff that the commercial fishermen needed – anchors and whatever – but that got burned. And when they rebuilt it, they rebuilt it in a different configuration to the store, and during that time, Billy's Store was expanding, and it seemed like they got their expansion down quicker than the other one did, and it seemed like people started gravitating towards Billy's Store more than the other one. And to the other one, there was a place where the guys could just sit around a table and talk about fishing. But it just seems like the new store, it just didn't have that same feeling about it that the old store did. But something interesting that I'll put here, the Ramsey's store – the old man, his son Randy Ramsey,

became a millionaire building boats! And it was so funny, he stopped – my husband was building boats, he built them about twenty years, and he stopped by our boathouse one day, my husband came in for lunch with his dad, he says, "You're never gonna guess who came by here just a little bit ago. Randy Ramsey wants to build boats! He don't know how to even cut a two boat!" [laughter] Or whatever.

EL: [laughter]

MAR: He said, "He come by with some other guy," he says, "I reckon that'll be purty when he gets through with that!"

EL: [laughter]

MAR: And he has gone, he's got the Jarrett Bay marine industrial complex, [inaudible] sponsors the tournament, made himself a millionaire because he had the business head on him! My husband had it in his hands, but he didn't have much of a business head on him, and I weren't that much better either, I didn't want to get too big, because I didn't want to get too rich and have all the stress on me! [laughter]

EL: [laughter]

MAR: But anyway, that's just a little bit of the history of the store, it was Randy Ramsey's daddy,

EL: Oh, wow.

MAR: That owned that first one where all the guys would hang out, but unfortunately that burned down and when they rebuilt it, it just never had the same feel about it. So Randy went his own way, with the marine industrial complex.

EL: Wow. So when you were an adult, and you were married and you had children, where would you usually go to get groceries, or would you go to certain restaurants on the Island?

MAR: Early days, Beaufort had an AMP, they had a Colonial Store down on the waterfront. And I would get the majority of my groceries there, if I had run out of something, whatever, one or two items I would get at Billy's.

EL: Okay.

MAR: But for bigger groceries, and that's when you could get groceries for ten dollars a bag. [laughter]

EL: Very different now.

MAR: Yeah, right?

EL: [laughter]

MAR: And then too, I started working at the NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, the laboratory in 1962, so if I was coming home from work, I could stop by any of those grocery stores that was convenient and didn't have to make a special trip.

EL: Can you actually talk about your work at NOAA, what did you do?

MAR: Early on, for the first several years, I was helping the guys type up their – they were writing the research manuscripts longhand, and I'd have to give them, provide them a typed-up version. And then

they'd edit it again and I'd go back in, you know, and make the edited version. So I was in the typing pool for a few years, but I slowly gravitated, and see that was… for about three years I did that, but my children—my mother was taking care of my children, and I didn't want her to have to have the burden of taking care of my children every day, so I wanted to go to part-time work, so I could ease off on her responsibilities, and then also spend more time with my own children! So a position came up within the lab there to maintain the reprint collection, the guys would do the research, and it would appear maybe in a scientific journal, but they'd have reprints of it. [sounds of outside construction begin] So if anybody wanted a reprint of just their research, they could get that. So I started cataloging those and maintaining that collection, having a different mailing list of different research, marine research institutions within the United States and also overseas. And every—so many months or once a year, whatever, I can't remember the schedule on that, we'd send them out a list of all the current reprints we had available, along with a form – and I had them numbered, so they could send the form back and say "I want number such-and-such, number 800, number 600, whatever," and then I'd mail that out to them, so I'd do that from 1965 until I retired. And I still help occasionally with typing manuscripts, 'cause I got to be known as the fastest typist in the—you'd never know it by the way I walk! [laughter] But a very, very fast typist, I could crank out a full page, double-spaced in three minutes, you know. So, I was pretty fast. So they did that, I did that in between maintaining the reprint collection. I enjoyed, I loved what I did.

EL: So was this—did you say this was about fisheries, a lot of them?

MAR: A lot of them had to do with marine fisheries, effects of radiation on fishes… oh golly, it's been so long, see, I've been retired almost thirty years! [laughter] I worked for thirty-three years and have been retired almost as many years as I worked! Anything having to do with marine life, the effects of whatever, the environment, ecosystems, and all… anything having to do with marine life and habitat. I've even kept a list of all the reprints, I think there was twelve hundred we had, close to twelve hundred, when I retired, so I still keep a list of that as a reminder of what I did! [laughter] So when I get Alzheimer's I can go, "Oh yes! You did that!" You know? [laughter]

EL: [laughter] So how did the information in the manuscripts from NOAA, their research, compare to the knowledge that a lot of the fishermen had from Harkers Island?

MAR: I think a lot of the fishermen always felt that these federal agencies needed to confer with them more than what they did, 'cause they would say to themselves, "How does somebody from Kansas or Nebraska know about, you know, the South Atlantic Ocean? We know, we've been out there every day for years—we know about what's going on, you know? We can help you make sensible decisions!" And I think there was a little bit of resentment there for not being included on decisions and left up to the federal government. So… I'd say there was a tension.

EL: Do you think that they weren't represented well enough, the commercial fishermen?

MAR: Back then, I don't think they were. They might be doing a little bit better now, but even then, when politics gets into something, and then people with money want decisions made on their behalf for them to do their own thing, and the poor commercial fisherman, he's only got enough money if he made a good catch – he doesn't have the money to fight big money. And I haven't been following that – well, I know, my daughter-in-law became very interested in the commercial fishermen, and she did a little video of, I've got the name of it at home, Cathy Rose, having to do with commercial fishermen and interviewing them and pictures of them and so forth, and trying to make people aware of, you know, the

type of life—it's a hard life, and it's not a dependable life, and it's hard to just get in debt not knowing what the weather's, how the weather's gonna affect you, how regulations coming down the pipe is going to affect you, like I think floundering is completely eliminated for this year. And even me, with my recreational guests, that love to do recreational fishing, they're really outdone about it because they love to go flounder fishing in the fall—they can't come for that, that's the only reason they come, that affects me indirectly! And whatever affects fishing, if it's in favor of the recreational fishermen, 'course that helps tourism in the county. And then to the people who are involved in tourism could be having an impact on the type of legislation that is passed in their behalf versus, you know, if this is passed to favor the commercial fishermen, that's gonna hurt us, and you know, we're gonna lose money because we're not going to get the recreational guys that come down and spend money in our vacation rentals and our restaurants and whatever. But I feel like they need to confer with the really sensible commercial fishermen that realize that "We can't overfish to the point that we're gonna fish ourselves out of business. You know, get it all this year, and then there's nothing left next year for me, or if my son wants to do this for a living, there's not going to be anything left for them." So people who've got a – a commercial fisherman who's got a vision of what needs to be done to make sure that each generation coming along can participate in it, that they need to contact them, get their input.

EL: Now, did you witness the decline of commercial fishing from maybe your father's generation to your generation, or was that maybe something that happened after?

MAR: I noticed it, well, when we operated our boatbuilding business, my husband was building wooden boats, but he also had a marine railways. That's where the commercial fishermen would—it's like a railroad track, it goes down in the water, and they have a little thing there that holds them out above, they would pull their boats on that to either change the wheel – you had to put antifouling paint on the bottom of the boat, or else marine growth would really destroy it. And so he got a lot of input from those men, sometimes he had the capacity to pull two boats at a time, one in front of the other. But as time went on, this was like the 70s and into the 80s, maybe the early 90s, he was pulling two boats at a time, and they'd be allowed three days up there, and he'd get them off… So he was getting a lot of input from them, just standing around talking about, you know, what was happening. And I even heard when I was working at the Beaufort laboratory, NOAA, one of the director, made the comment, and this was right before I retired, maybe two to three before I retired, which was in 1995 – that within five to ten years, ten years max, maybe within five years, commercial fishing would be almost a thing of the past. So there was something coming that they either were privy to, or were *partaking* in. And that I don't know which it was. And if they were having a part in this to happen, or they just heard down the pipe that this would be happening, because of regulations that maybe they had input, or didn't have input into.

EL: Oh my gosh. So do you think that your experience working for NOAA gave you, maybe, more foresight into what was happening than people who were separated from it?

MAR: A little bit, because I think some of the intentions were good, but some people just wanted to think of a problem to justify submitting a proposal to get funding to get them a salary for that year. I mean, I heard a man almost indirectly, around the pound, sort of indicate that "If I submit this proposal," they could say, "Oh yeah, this is a problem," whether they had the proper answer to it or not, it justified funds for study for that, which they would be the recipient of the salary for that particular project.

EL: That's awful.

MAR: Yeah, yeah. So that's where politics and self gets into the situation. "My yearly salary, or however long the study takes, I'm getting my salary, but this study may mean that you may not be able to fish and make a living for your family."

EL: How much do you think this decline of commercial fishing because of regulations has impacted island culture?

MAR: A lot of, well… I'm just assuming now that maybe a son growing up in a commercial fishing family, seeing how rough it was for his family, maybe his dad not being able to get for him the things that he would love to have that his friends have, and their dads worked at Cherry Point. "My dad's a commercial fisherman, dad who worked at Cherry Point – my friend—his dad was able to buy him a used car for his sixteenth birthday. I can't get nothing like that." You know, so…Remind me of that question, I got off the track…

EL: Oh no, you're totally fine! If – do you think that the decline of commercial fishing—how much of that has kind of led to maybe a change in island culture?

MAR: Okay, yeah, right! Okay, yeah, I'll get back on track! I think the sons growing up and says, "I'm gonna get me a steady job where I know how much I'm coming" – like my dad did, he went in the Coast Guard for that reason, 'cause he saw there was no living. And I think some of them have decided "If I can be smart enough to pass the test at Cherry Point, I'm going to go to Cherry Point and I know I've got this coming in every week and I can get this and I can go ahead and get a house, get a mortgage, get a car payment—'cause Daddy couldn't, or Daddy lost that car because they had a bad season and then we had no way to get our – or if they had two cars, maybe they lost one of them." So I think they look back and see the uncertainty of that lifestyle, even though they love being out on the water and smelling that and pulling the fish, they loved it – but the uncertainty of it, 'cause some of them probably had to say, "I've got to do the common sense thing here. I'll go fishing—" Like see, after Daddy got out of the Coast Guard, he went fishing! He loved it because he didn't *have* to do it. He did it for the fun of it. And he just enjoyed pulling those fish in, but see he had his Coast Guard check coming in. And he knew that he had grocery money and car and whatever. So, I think a lot of them started gravitating away from that as their main source of income, and going to places like Cherry Point or even state jobs, the port authority over at Morehead City, or within maybe the public school system, or even at the court house, maybe a county job—something that was more certain. And then let fishing be done as they felt like it for fun.

EL: Wow. Can you talk about some of the other changes that you've seen on the Island, maybe before the 1980s, and then those in the 80s and 90s, and then afterwards in the 2000s?

MAR: One thing always stood out in my mind is way early on, because everybody was related to each other, I could walk through your yard to get down to the shore and you'd let me put my little skiff down there, or whatever. But now, with everybody, non-natives owning all the shore land, it's 'No Trespassing,' you can't walk through their yard. You can't walk through their yard to get to… And back then, I guess erosion was taking place, but there was a shoreline, a sandy shoreline, where you could, you know, walk down there, wade out to your little skiff, get in your skiff, and then paddle out to your big boat and go fishing and do that in reverse. But now everybody that's got property along there, because of hurricanes, and you can't blame them, are putting the boulders there. So you've got a

shoreline that does not exist as it did forty, fifty years ago. And, you can't – if you live across the street from somebody in your old homeplace, and somebody down on the shore has got a—they've just come in and built this – I can't walk across the street, and walk through your yard just to go down to the shoreline, if I can get there, just to wade in the water, just for the fun of it. The pure fun of just wading in the water, splashing and then walking back to the house, you know? [laughter] So, just being restricted in how we can move around on the Island because of 'No Trespassing' signs, or if they don't have a sign, you pretty much can read between the lines that they don't want you walking through their yard.

EL: And when did that really start to happen?

MAR: I would say probably for sure, I'm just saying probably for sure in the 1990s? It's just intensified because there are more of them now. And everybody's putting in the boulders to keep their land from washing away, and you can understand that, 'cause Daddy had some shoreline – no, he had a friend, he had a cousin up at the west end of the Island who had shoreline property, and then there's Daddy's lot behind it. Well the guy who had shoreline property washed away, every bit that washed away, he lost ten feet! He went into the back of his line and moved that back ten feet into Daddy's line! So that he always had a waterfront lot, so he sold that waterfront lot which had technically washed away, made money off of it at the expense of Daddy! [laughter]

EL: Oh, wow.

MAR: But Daddy never confronted him about it, he never wanted to start a fight. So Daddy give in. Daddy saw more – he inherited enough land that he would have had enough for every child he had, for every child and grandchild, but he let other people manipulate him to that land to where he had very little left.

EL: Oh, I'm sorry.

MAR: Yeah, yeah.

EL: So can you talk a bit more about some of the natural changes that you've seen on the Island, or to the natural areas, like erosion?

MAR: When we started to first come down, people did not have grassy lawns. They had a house, and sometimes woods in front of their house, like the west end of the Island, when you come around that curve, everything from Rush Point Lane all the way around to where the road starts to dip down a little bit – all that was wooded. You could not see the water. So there was a lot of woodland. And I think that probably helped protect them, maybe from harsh winds – 'cause you had a variety of trees, you had oak trees, you had pine trees, weeping willows, even had fruit trees, at that end over there, I think he said his grandmother had a peach tree! Can you imagine a peach tree on Harkers Island? I can't imagine it now! But the woods protected some of these more delicate trees, so there were able to grow. So there was a lot of woodland, and I remember my aunt, the one that we stayed with, she didn't have any grass in her front yard, and if she wanted her front yard to look good, she raked it or took her broom out there and brushed the sand! Because you just couldn't grow, [drilling sound gets louder] say, generic-type grass on Harkers Island soil. But along about the nineteen—early 1960s, there was a man in Beaufort who started bringing topsoil from the mainland for somebody's front yard. 'cause they wanted to have a nice-looking yard. So little by little, people started clearing some of the unwanted trees in their

front yard, and had old Wallace Garner bring in dirt and put it in their front yard and grow grass. But prior to that, very little, very few grassy yards, and lots of woods. And I think it helped also slow down any tornado damage, 'cause tornadoes, if I'm not mistaken, do best when there's a big open area where they can gain their energy with nothing to obstruct them. So I think as we see more and more people taking down more and more trees, we're going to have more and more tornado problems, like we had this past February. That's the first tornado I remember living here over sixty years. The first tornado.

EL: Wow.

MAR: Of any significance. And it's because people are just shoving down all the trees. They don't want to mow around them! They don't want to line trim around them! Too much work! [laughter]

EL: And so did that – did the trees start – they started to be knocked down in the 80s, when people started to take the waterfront?

MAR: I think when outsiders came in—and this is just, I'm sort of thinking off the top of my head – people who maybe lived in areas inland, which was farm country, where they had nothing but fields as far as they could see, no trees to obstruct them, well they come to the coast, and they want to get rid of the trees there! Just like they didn't have that many trees up in farm country! So they start knocking – I think as people start moving in from other areas where it was more flat, they started getting rid of the trees in their yard.

EL: Oh my goodness. So a lot of changes.

MAR: Yeah. A lot of changes in the topography of the Island. Yep. 'Cause when I moved on my lot up there on Bayview, I could not see the bay out there, because of trees

EL: Wow.

MAR: and marshland and so forth. But, it was a lot of marsh grass. We… well, let's see… I'm trying to figure out what we took down… We didn't take down that many trees, but there was a lot of marsh grass that we were sort of able to cut back, whatever, 'cause I remember when I was first able to see the bay—whoop-dee-doo, you know – "Wow, I can see the water now!" You know, after five or six years. Then, too, sometimes a storm will take down some trees and have to cut them down – for instance, Hurricane Florence, it took down fifteen of my trees during that night at the storm.

EL: Wow.

MAR: And then in the ensuing year, year and a half, it killed at least another thirty of my trees, and I had to take them down, because a dead tree is dangerous, you never know when – 'cause it was a man that went to the high school I did back in Smyrna, way back there, and he just happened to be walking through some wooded area there in the community of Bettie on the mainland, and just a dead limb fell out of a tree on him – broke his neck and killed him!

EL: Awful.

MAR: So you can't – I lost – when I moved on that lot, I had over a hundred trees on my lot. Now I'm down to thirty. All because of storms and dying trees, not because – I only had one that was alive that I took out because it was so close to the house. I kept taking off limbs, and by then, it looked so horrible and stupid, I says, "Well, I might as well take down the whole thing!" But I was trying to hold on to that

thing as long as I could – why couldn't it be in a part of the lot where it's not a problem, where I could enjoy – but it was right there near my front steps so I had to take it down. But storms and people not wanting trees in their yard to have to mow around and all that are taking down those trees.

EL: Oh my goodness. Where do you think – so you said the waterfront, and then Bayview – what are some places where the trees have really been knocked down? What are the most significant areas?

MAR: I would say mostly on the water side.

EL: Okay.

MAR: Mostly on the water side. The people on Bayview Drive have a tendency to have more trees in their yard, and I don't know if the salt coming off of the bay on that side, the hard wind, if the salt spray is killing them, or they're just wanting to not have an obstruction in their view of the lighthouse, or don't want to mow around it, or it could be a combination of all those reasons. But it seems to be far less trees. When you ride down the Island, especially from the Harkers Island Fishing Center, that area, all down towards to where that curve is – just notice and see there doesn't seem to be many trees in people's yards.

EL: Not at all, no. And you said that you saw differences in the marshes in Bayview, in that area, was there – did the marshes start to deplete, if I am understanding correctly?

MAR: Well, no, I don't remember saying that, but now that you mention it, I've got an area of marshland on my property that used to be marsh grass there, but I'm noticing that it's depleted. It's just like a big barren muddy spot, and I don't know why! I don't know what's caused that!

EL: When did that start to happen?

MAR: The last, maybe, two to three years?

EL: Okay.

MAR: Yeah, that particular area. 'Cause some of the people, my brothers-in-law – "Ann, have you noticed there ain't no marsh grass out there?" I says "I really hadn't thought about it, but now that I'm looking at it, yeah! Wonder what's happened?" You know? I don't know.

EL: Is that all around the Island?

MAR: I really don't know, 'cause I'd have to almost get out and walk into a person's backyard to look at it! I don't think it's over the whole Island, but for some reason it's there on my property, but I don't know if it's something peculiar to my lot that could be causing it. Now, I've got a little harbor in my backyard with boats in there, and I don't know if it could be, you know, the combination of oil that they mix with gasoline for their outboard motors, could be anything in that, that is washed over in that area and killed it – possibility. Very possibility. 'Cause I'm one of few harbors on that side of the Island that can accommodate that many boats in a compact area.

EL: Okay. I see. And when was that harbor cut?

MAR: Well, back in the late 60s, the county dug mosquito drainage ditches every hundred feet along the north side of Harkers Island. And we had at least maybe one or two fall on our property, one of them for sure, 'cause we bought one lot, and then in two or three years we bought another lot. But on the first lot, there was a ditch that came up in there, and we just were able to get a permit to have that cleaned

out and widened to where we could get a boat down it, 'cause my husband wanted to build boats. And then they had what they call like a cross – they had the ditches coming up, and then at the head of the ditches, near the higher land mass was, they had a cross ditch which connected them. So we took that cross ditch and widened that and made a harbor out of that. Then once we got it dug, then we were able to get what they call a clean-out permit to clean it out, and 'course when you clean it out, four or five feet accidentally falls… So we were able to enlarge it to where it is now, but I can't go any further with it. And I really don't want to at my age, I don't need any more boats in there, have to tend to people! [laughter]

EL: [laughter] That's very fair! Now what were some of the other natural areas of Harkers Island, or areas of the Island that have changed that were most significant to Islanders or Island culture?

MAR: I would say Shell Point. This area here [Core Sound Museum], across the street, there used to be Miss Harker's Lodge. Probably heard about Miss Harker's Lodge. Oh, she was quite a character! I don't know if I'm the second Miss Harker or not! [laughter]

EL: [laughter]

MAR: In some points, I hope not! But anyway, she had the – offshore, from the land there, there are septic tanks that the boats have to be careful going through because they were—there's been so much erosion over there that the land has washed away where the septic tanks were located for her little lodge! And there was also a fish house down there, in that little harbor area, Walter Nelson operated that fish house-- as a matter of fact, his daughter lives up to the west'ard there when you're coming around that sharp curve before you hit Lily Bell, that house, that little beigey brick house to the right, all those beautiful flowers in the yard, that's Judy. That's Walter's daughter. She could tell you about her Daddy and that little operation down there if you want to ask her. I've got her phone number if you want to ask her. She goes to my church. Down there. And then to the Park Service building -- I think there's information there in my exhibit upstairs—that was a motel. Carl – oh, I forgot about Carl Lewis. Carl Lewis had that built, but he had a store—we were talking about stores earlier, I forgot about Carl – right across from the Methodist Church and where Cape Lookout [Drive] veers off this way from the main road – over to the left was Carl Lewis's Store. It was a bowling alley and a dance hall!

EL: Oh, neat!

MAR: Yeah! And Carl ran that. And then he built the motel down there, and then, 'course, with all the transitions down there, the Park Service took it over and made the headquarters out of there. And there used to be two restaurants down there. One off from the very end of the Island -- I mean, it was Shell Point – which was a brick restaurant, as a matter of fact, I was pregnant, I can remember with my first child or my second child, me and my husband ate there. Then later on that closed down and I want to say a marine research facility on the Island, I believe it was the state one or the federal one that I worked for, used it as an office space, and then it was completely torn down, either that or it was destroyed by a hurricane to the point where it didn't make sense to build that. But right before you get to that on the left, right about to where you go into the Park Service for the ferry parking, there was another wooden building, and that was a restaurant. So you had two restaurants down there – I think that was called Myer's Restaurant—so I would say – and then this area here was not visible at all. The man who owned this property, Earl Davis, he owned pretty much from here right on up to where I live and beyond, at least—I would say almost the east end of Harkers Island.

EL: Wow.

MAR: His dad owned. And there's been a lot of tension and so forth between his heirs and what happened between them and the Park Service, for the Park Service to get his land, the price they wanted to give him—there's a lot of tension there. I don't know all the details. But I would say this area here had the most dramatic changes as far as physical changes.

EL: Do you know when they put that marine research office space, or when they moved it?

MAR: Oh, gosh. Let's see, my children were born in the 60s…It could have been the late 60s, early 70s, but I don't think it lasted much more than three or four years.

EL: Okay.

MAR: Then, for some reason, a storm made it vulnerable. I don't know if the Park Service was… 'Cause I think it was mid-1980s that the Park Service started getting involved and started creating their headquarters at this end of the Island and forcing off all of the little camps off of the Banks. The Island folks would build over there, that was their little vacation, a little camp over there, they'd go. I'd say the mid-80s under Ronald Reagan… The Park Service might have some record of when that little building was demolished and how long it had been there before it was taken down and if they had anything to do with it, taking it down. Maybe.

EL: I see. I've been told a pretty significant area of the Island was Academy Field?

MAR: Yes. That's across from… okay, across from the school, it was only up until about maybe five or six years ago that was all wooded. And the reason it was called Academy Field because there was a school, a church-sponsored school there. And there's a picture of that in my album with "Schools." And it was some kind of – I can't remember, I think it was some religious outfit out of the Northeast, maybe Massachusetts or Maine, created that school there, I think it was an academy. So therefore that whole area was called Academy Field. And then that was long gone and that name just remained. And it stayed like that for decades and decades. Kind of a way some teenagers that lived at this end of the Island that wanted to walk up to the main part of the Island where I said all the activities were going, Mabel's Store, the theater – well, they got to that area, there was always legends about being it haunted. So they would – when they got to there, they would almost run through that part of the Island to get to where their home was on the other side, 'cause you know how stories start, "Well, I saw this," or "I saw that," or "I heard this, I heard that." So it became a scary part, 'cause the school wasn't there—both sides of the road were completely wooded.

EL: Wow.

MAR: And spooky! [laughter]

EL: That's so interesting. So we've been talking a lot about changes, but I'd like to talk about what you did when you realized all these changes were going on. Can you talk a bit about what prompted you to compile "Harkers Island: Past and Present," your massive collection of Harkers Island culture?

MAR: I started seeing the way of life that I witnessed when we would come down to visit family, I started seeing that to slowly change, fade away, especially as the really old folks were dying off. And especially as I would see an old house be torn down and I would remember who lived there—it's gone. And I remember how much I treasured those memories and coming here and seeing all that, how much it meant to me personally because it was so different from Long Island, whereas the people who grew up here just took it for granted, you know, "This is us, the whole world's got to be like us," I mean… [laughter] "Or if it isn't, we certainly don't want to go there!" So I saw the old homes being torn down, one-by-one, and I'd say, "Oh my, who's going to be next?" I says, "I've got to try to document these old

houses so there would be some record that they existed!" Like, for instance, where Dollar General is now – Clarence's Store was there! And so I've got a picture of that. I mean, there in my album – west'ard to east'ard, every house, or vice-versa, but anyway—every house that was up—there's one house in there that I had a picture of, and for some reason I took it home, I think I took it home with me because it's missing from the album, and I'm going to blame myself for taking it home with me! It's the oldest house on the Island, it was over a hundred years old, down on the shore, at the west'ard. And I think the reason I took it home was a man had come to my house inquiring about which is the oldest house or he had heard it was, might be one in that neighborhood – so we rode down there and tried to figure out how to get to it. We went in the driveway, that didn't work – we could see it! But then we finally found a way—so he had his camera with him! So we finally found a way to get over to the old house, and he went inside and took pictures – inside it, outside – so I've got those pictures, and I think… either those pictures and the original pictures I had of the house when you could actually see it a little bit from the road—either to my house for to reconvene and get them together, or I put the inside photos in the album, and had lost track of the original one of the house and have yet to find it – I've got to get them back together, but that's the only one that's really a problem for me getting together and it's bothering me because it's the oldest house!

EL: I saw it in the album!

MAR: Yeah!

EL: It is there!

MAR: The John Lewis house! See, Daddy knew who owned all these houses, who lived there, what their wives' names were, what their young'uns' names were. He remembered all that! And he was such a wealth of information, 'cause he had a fantastic memory, even till the day he died he had a good memory. Almost a hundred and two, he lived to be.

EL: That's amazing.

MAR: So, but that's the one house I've got to try to get some time to figure out what I did with that shot of the old house. I think I've got to do it – did you say you saw it in there--?

EL: I saw it in there!

MAR: -- with the inside shots?

EL: I only saw the outside shot.

MAR: You only saw the outside, okay. I've got to try to get that together when I've got the time. But anyway, I said all that to say this: I just saw, as I'd go along, I'd just say, "Oh, this house, it's old. Somebody's going to come along and buy that lot and shove that thing down." So I'd take 'em, take 'em, take 'em. Because I started seeing that starting to happen, that's what motivated me to start that. And then every time I would come across an article about Harkers Island, about the culture, or whatever, I'd say, "Well, I'm going to save that!" And then I saved, everything I had saw, and then I made a list of what I had saved. And then I haven't had a chance to update that in five or six years. But the copy is somewhere! I've come down here, slipped it in the album, where I thought it was appropriate, and before I knew it, I had an album for transportation, for the old timers, for the stores, for the houses, and it just grew and grew and grew, and it was just in my office, and that was about the time the museum was starting in its infancy. I think they had the first – right next to the fire house was a little medical clinic that was here for a few years, well that didn't play out, then they started using that as like a temporary headquarters, and then they came down here and had part of the building done. But I'd bring

my collection for Waterfowl Weekend, then I had to take it back home. And it was so wonderful where it got to the point where I could take it and leave it! [laughter]

EL: It's a phenomenal collection!

MAR: But I try to keep adding to it, and no telling what I've got at home that needs to be added to it!

EL: So where did you find a lot of this information, all these articles?

MAR: I would stumble across them, heaven knows where, maybe a subscription in a magazine, sometimes going out of a restaurant, you'll see something laying there, something about the county, and I would thumb through it – "Oh, there's something about So-and-So, he's an Island person." Like Jamie Lewis, who died last week, he was my double first cousin. A craftsman, probably one of the best boatbuilders probably on the east coast, North Carolina for sure. But I would stumble across articles – "Oh, that's about an Island person, or the Island itself," whatever, so I'd snatch it, you know, bring it home, and just collect and collect and collect. Then *The Mailboat*, I think I had a subscription to *The Mailboat*, which had a lot of good history, not only of Harkers Island, but also the other communities that immigrated from Shackleford Banks at the turn of the century – Salter Path, Marshallberg, Portsmouth, and all that. So, it's just… and I don't know, I'm a glutton for history about this place, there was just something– the place was such a meaning to me, that every time I saw something about it, I wanted people to know – and somebody'd say, "Well, where are you from?" Well, sometimes the people on the west end of the county looked down on people from Down East, and especially Harkers Island, just 'cause we talked funny! [laughter] Well, I never had the accent! [laughter] And I'd say, "This is to prove there's more stuff written about us than there is about you!" But not really, but anyway… just to show, you know, there's a cultural value to this place, and we need to keep it alive. So we have a situation now there's more people who love Harkers Island than there are those who frown upon it, from way, way, way, way back, they frowned upon it, you know. "But they didn't go to high school, they never graduated, and we did!" You know, that type of looking down, you know.

EL: Mm-hmm.

MAR: But some of the – a lot of the Island men, especially, had a lot of hands on experience, a lot of common sense, and because of their, maybe, poverty, had the ingenuity to figure out how to do something and make it work. Creative. And I told somebody, I says, "I'd rather have a creative blue collar man than one that graduates from—" I ran with a couple—a couple of the guys over where I worked, [laughter] graduated with a science degree

EL: [laughter]

MAR: Couldn't figure out how to change a battery in a car! You know, how to clean out the thing, you know, and put it back in there, and the positive and the negative and all that. You know? [laughter] So… but they were creative, and… okay, I've got sidetracked, honey, take me back to where your question was, again.

EL: I think actually you covered it! It was phenomenal!

MAR: I think we're ready for the next one, okay!

EL: I think it's interesting, you know, you talk about kind of the ingenuity

MAR: Yes!

EL: Of the men, and I mean your cousin!

MAR: Oh, that's right, 'cause all the men could build boats from scratch, they didn't need plans, people would say, "Where's your plans?" They ain't got no plans!

EL: And that's genius!

MAR: That's right! It's genius! They had a piece of—they'd find a piece of plywood big enough to nail to a post, they write a bunch of numbers on it, that's the way my husband did it! He built his daddy's – built a boat for his daddy when he was sixteen or seventeen years old! But he had that same genius, but he wasn't as perfect as Jamie was, 'cause he always said Jamie was the best boatbuilder there was on the Island—but they had that creative genius about them!

EL: Yes!

MAR: And so, it's remarkable, and a lot of them had it! When my husband was building the boats, there was twelve boatyards on Harkers Island. This is a guy you're going to have to interview: Jamie Chadwick. He builds a boat – you ever heard of prefab houses?

EL: I don't think so, no.

MAR: Okay, there's prefab houses, they put them together like a, what do you call them, nowadays, not the double-wides, the other ones, they call it—but anyway, he does his boats prefab! He takes his measurements, he cuts all his parts, separately, and then – my daughter told me this, because when she told me this, I was flabbergasted – she said, he'll take all his parts and put them together and put them together in one day!

EL: Oh my gosh!

MAR: Prefab boats!

EL: That's amazing!

MAR: That's even more of a genius than Jamie!

EL: That is amazing!

MAR: 'Cause they said, someone, he had sent a boat to Florida, and Jamie was down there, just maybe double checking on something, some guy, a graduate from a university, he and his wife were walking down there – "Who built that boat there? That's a magnificent boat!" The owner says, "That guy over there," you know, pointing to Jamie. "Oh, no, not him, not *him,* not him!" "Oh, yeah!" "Now really, tell me, quit joking around, who built this boat?" "That guy over there!" [laughter] They couldn't believe it! Remarkable genius.

EL: Do you think that your husband took for granted his own genius?

MAR: Yes! Lot of them took it for granted, they just took it for granted! They started doing it when they were little kids, they'd play around with wood, my husband said he would take a piece of wood and nail it when he was a little boy, four, five, six years old, and then directly he would add something, you know.

EL: That's remarkable!

MAR: Yeah! Instead of having radios and TVs and smartphones, to take up their time, they got out in the yard and played and created and made their own toys! Made their own little boats!

EL: Wow.

MAR: And made their pull boats! As a matter of fact, Billy Merkley is trying to get that to come back, the pull boats, they just take a little thing and put a string on it, a little thing, and then they run along the shore, when there was a shoreline they could get to and play along, because Mom and Daddy lived there or Granddaddy lived there, they could go along the shoreline and pull that little boats, and have little races, one with the other, you know. So very ingenius people, very ingenius.

EL: Absolutely!

MAR: That's right!

EL: And do you think – you talked about how your perspective is different as someone who's from the Island but was born elsewhere and grew up elsewhere – did you really see that with your husband, the taking for granted Island culture?

MAR: I think so. I think anyone who was born here and raised here their whole life took it for granted. Especially if they didn't get around other people and other cultures and traveling and whatever, just stayed here pretty much their whole life—it was natural to them. Took it for granted. They didn't realize the special skills and abilities they had. And even amongst the ladies I've seen what remarkable skills they have for decorating their houses – some of my sisters-in-law, some of the most magnificent homes, I mean, they know how to place this and that and that – remarkable! Remarkable! I don't have it! [laughter]

EL: [laughter]

MAR: [laughter] But they do! Certain families seem to have greater skills, or skills in particular areas, maybe another one doesn't have as much as they do. I have a sister-in-law that's great when it comes to decorating, two or three of them, magnificent.

EL: That is amazing. And now, I'd be interested – talking about, you know, how you and your husband grew up, you know, your visits to the Island – can you talk about your children, and if applicable, their children, and how their experience growing up on the Island was different from what Harkers Island was like for you, when you were visiting, and for your husband, when he was growing up?

MAR: See, they came along in the early 60s, but even then, it was right at that pivotal point where things were about to change from what they had been the previous decades, 'cause my son, now, he lives in Gloucester, and he – as a matter of fact, he's probably over there mowing my grass right now, he does it every Wednesday – but he seems to be okay with living in Gloucester, he says, "Harkers Island is not like it was when I grew up." Now, I think the fact that I have not sold the old homeplace, even though my husband died three years ago, I have elected to not sell the homeplace, but the only semblance of home to him is that homeplace that he has been in ever since he was a kid, you know, two, three years old, whatever. But he says it's not the same, and even my daughter says, she says, "It's not the same as when I grew up," she says, and it's a source of grief to them, 'cause the memories… memories they have back then in the early 60s to what it's become, 'cause even back then, I'd say the Island was at least 80 to 90 percent native, 80 to 90 percent native, in the early 60s.

EL: Was their experience similar to yours when you were growing up?

MAR: Well see, they were born here and lived here their whole life. So they may have taken that for granted like the other Islanders did. And, 'course, they probably recalled me telling them how life was when I grew up, versus Harkers Island, and how different it was, so I don't know what effect that has on them to appreciate it more.

EL: Mm-hmm.

MAR: But see now that they see so many people coming in, and… I think the way it is with Islanders, if the people that come in will love the culture, love the way of life, love the peacefulness, and want to become more like the Islanders than where they come from, and blend in, they will blend in. But if they come in and isolate themselves, "Don't walk across the lawn, I'm not gonna become part of any of the church families, because I don't go to church…" See they don't realize, if you can become part of a church family, what a blessing it is. 'Cause I mean, something happens to you, you got people to pray for you.

EL: Mm-hmm.

MAR: 'Cause we've had that happen at our church in recent months, people that were almost on their deathbed on the way out.

EL: Oh my goodness.

MAR: But if they come with that attitude, "I've come here because I want only tranquility, and go fishing when I want, but I really don't care about becoming part of a community," if they come with that attitude, they're not going to – locals are not going to be really eager to welcome them, they're going to sense that, maybe, arrogance, you know? So… I guess you might say there's two categories of people that move in: those that want to isolate, "I'm better than you, I'm arrogant, I've come here to fish and that's all I'm going to do, you do your own thing, don't bother me," or the ones that come in, wanting to get involved with the museum, find them a church family that they enjoy, participate in all the Island events…" Now those kind of people, I think will be fairly welcome. Even though they might be more well-to-do, you know!

EL: Do you think

MAR: Attitude, I think is the difference!

EL: Do you think their actions can help preserve the Island culture?

MAR: It could, because like me, if they could see that this is a culture which is so unique and so different, that they want to get on board, and do sort of like I did, and preserve it… probably will be well, but the only thing is… the more the information gets… [laughter] If we could preserve it, without causing more people to come in, who may come in for the wrong reasons—that's the problem, you know! Some people never knew about Harkers Island until the Internet. You know? And in some kind of way the news got out! Or YouTube, or, you know… whatever. Or real estate showing-- "Oh, there's a house here on this little island, oh, a little island!" Then you go onto Harkers Island, type that into Google – "Oh! There's some fishermen! Oh! There's a boatbuilder! Well that sounds like a little quaint place to live, let's go down there and see!" There was a man that—he lived here on the Island, I reckon fifteen or twenty years, he moved here—but the reason he moved here, he had gone somewheres down to Florida, to deliver something, had to come back by plane, and flew over Harkers Island! "Oh, what a unique place!" He gets back to Connecticut, comes back in his car, finds a place on the Island and buys it and has been here till he died! [laughter]

EL: Wow!

MAR: So, I mean, it's amazing the ways that people find out about Harkers Island—the Internet, flying over, the job send them here, sometimes people come here, Marines—no telling how many Marines, back probably in the 40s and 50s, they were stationed at Cherry Point, and they go 'round to these little

towns just to date a girl! But they didn't realize when they date a girl from Harkers Island and want to marry her, that's where you're gonna live, sonny!

EL: [laughter]

MAR: 'Cause she ain't gonna leave! [laughter] And I can name on probably one hand or more the guys that did that—lived here till they died! Mm-hmm.

EL: Wow.

MAR: 'Cause they were a Marine from… Gene Camplain, Ray Hatford, Ted Wilson, those three come to my mind right offhand! They married 'em and they stayed here! A lot of things that bring people to Harkers Island that we have no control over. So that's the reason we don't want [laughter] more publicity than absolutely necessary, but still be able to maintain the culture of years gone by. And how do you do that effectively? I don't know.

EL: What have been some of the biggest movements to stop or slow these changes that you can remember?

MAR: Gosh… I don't know anything that will stop it, 'cause if you say, "Well, we're gonna price them out," that doesn't work, because the ones with the money could still pay for it, then they cause the rest of us taxes to go up! So that hurts us! And if you put the price too low, then everybody's going to come [laughter] get a piece of the pie! I don't know if threat of hurricanes would be a means of slowing it down—you are in hurricane alley, so to speak… I don't know if there's a way of stopping it or not, Eva. I just don't. I can't really offhand think of anything that's going to stop it. 'Cause it's a paradise found.

EL: It is. It really is.

MAR: Paradise found. 'Cause Daddy says he can remember when people would ask him where he was from—"What? Where's that?"

EL: [laughter]

MAR: You know? As many as fifty or sixty years ago, nobody knew that this place existed. Nobody knew. Because you could only get to it by boat. Prior to 1941, you could only get here by boat.

EL: That's amazing.

MAR: It was a paradise within itself. Even though the people were poor, they were related, they loved each other, they looked out for each other, and nobody bothered them. It was different. Drastically different. Well, even here, not only Harkers Island, I think also Davis, Davis Island… no… was it [inaudible]… But anyway, there was a black lady here, that was taken in. I don't know how she wound up here, but she was taken in by one of the local families, as one of their family. That was back maybe, after the emancipation of the slaves, but they were still, you know, rather desperate situations for the black folks. There's a picture in the front of our church, one of the families that traces back in our church way, way back, was the ones that took care of her, 'cause her picture's the one in our church fellowship hall, on the wall, with the rest of the white folks.

EL: Wow.

MAR: [laughter] You know? So we were unique, like I said, being isolated… We didn't have that cultural thing, you know, where "you're white, they're black," 'cause my husband, he says he remembers one time going to Beaufort with his daddy, for the first time ever seeing a black person.

EL: Wow.

MAR: He was just… "Daddy! Why are that color?" You know? [laughter] But they were kind, they were kind to each other, and even Sam Windsor's Lump over there on the south side of Shackleford, I think that was a black man. So, and then, Davis Ridge, oh yeah, Davis Ridge, you gotta read the story about Davis Ridge, I was—I found that and put that up there in the Davis community. Those families across from them, they were fishermen, black folks but they were fishermen. The white midwives would come from Davis community across Core Sound to go over there to help them deliver their babies.

EL: Wow.

MAR: No fear of the black husbands molesting them or anything like that or getting in trouble. They lived together in unity, till the government got in it. [laughter]

EL: It really is an amazing community, Down East.

MAR: Yeah. 'Cause I noticed it, one of them, was it Coast Watch publication? I remember when I saw that Coast Watch publication prior to me reading about Davis Ridge, then once I read that, I understood. But in that picture in shows a thatched hut, with black men standing in front of it, maybe with their nets or whatever. I says, "Black men, thatched huts," but then later on I found it, there was thatched huts, and it was black fishermen, and they were – lot of them were from Davis Ridge, and they eventually migrated from the Portsmouth and Davis Ridge down towards the Beaufort area. So, I says, "That explains it! It's the black fishermen played a big part in the fishing culture of the county, along with the—" 'cause they had, I remember when they had the menhaden display there--

EL: Mm-hmm.

MAR: Yeah. And even that fellow that wrote the movie *Roots*, do you remember that?

EL: Yes!

MAR: I think he either was from Beaufort or his wife was from Beaufort.

EL: Wow.

MAR: Yeah!

EL: That's amazing.

MAR: And as a matter of fact, he was in the Coast Guard, his wife was from Beaufort, and he was up on Long Island, New York – my daughter-in-law's grandfather and grandmother were lighthouse keepers at the Montauk Lighthouse.

EL: Wow.

MAR: And—Alex Haley was his name, Alex Haley, the one that wrote the book from which the movie was made. Alex—he was in the Coast Guard, and my daughter-in-law's grandfather was in the Coast Guard at Montauk – he went out there to the Montauk Lighthouse. Her grandfather and grandmother fixed supper for him out there!

EL: Wow.

MAR: And what's unique too – I'll throw it in right here – is my father and my mother were also lighthouse keepers at that same lighthouse! So my son and his wife have got that one thing in common—their grandparents were lighthouse keepers at the same lighthouse!

EL: What a small world!

MAR: Isn't that something?

EL: [laughter]

MAR: Yeah!

EL: That's amazing.

MAR: So, but that goes back to the cultural differences, or lack thereof great differences here, way back in the 40s and 50s amongst the black folks and the white folks, they dwelled together in harmony. Whereas, but then later on, it seems like the word got out – and I don't know exactly what decade that was in… The thought ran through the black community that "Don't be on Harkers Island after the sun goes down!" So I don't know if someone had issued a threat against them, maybe, I don't know, if someone had tried to date them, a white girl… So anyway, that happened, but I don't know the circumstances that brought that about considering the prior history of harmony. I don't understand that.

EL: It is amazing! It's an amazing place. Now, you have covered so much, it's amazing!

MAR: Oh, probably too much! [laughter]

EL: No! Not at all! It's phenomenal! But is there anything else you'd like to add before we finish up?

MAR: Only thing is I plan to live here hopefully till the day I die, or the government takes my place from me. I don't know… with the political tensions that are rising, I don't know what's going to happen to me if I don't become part of a global system that could deprive me of my property rights—that's something in the works that people have got to really start following because it's going to be dangerous. But I want to be here, and let my children decide what is most advantageous to them. I would hate to see it sold, and somebody come in and put a condominium in my place, but I do understand it is a place of great intense labor to maintain it, and to run it the way I've done – I don't believe my daughter could do it, my daughter has asthma, that she's had along COVID, and her stamina is not like mine. I'm an old work horse like my daddy. Eighty-two years old, I'm still line-trimming my ditches

EL: That's amazing.

MAR: And using my hedge trimmers and pushing a mower, I did that two days ago out to the end of the canal, which is 850 feet and back, with my push mower. So, I don't see her being able to do what I do. But I would love to be able to keep it in the family, as long as possible, because of the culture, and the heritage, and it's been there that long, and it's seen so many changes. Sometimes I say, "Well, should I just turn it into like a mini museum, take the old boathouse and put pictures and see and give it history?" I've thought about that at times. So I don't know how, and I don't know how long the Lord's going to let me live, and I say, "Lord, if there's anything that you want me to do that's going to be helpful to people, to the Island, whatever, give me the strength and the mindset to do it, until you say, 'Well, used her up—take her home!'" [laughter]

EL: [laughter] But you have done a phenomenal job, I think, of—I know many people, and you have done one of the most amazing jobs of preserving the heritage.

MAR: Well, I appreciate that compliment, because I feel like those first sixteen years that I was not here, and that other people were, that hopefully they could fill in some gaps that I can't 'cause of the fact I wasn't here. And I don't know—and then the people in my age group who you might want to consider—

and she loves to talk, and funny as can be – would be Judy Guthrie, the daughter of Walter Nelson, Judy Nelson Guthrie. She's about my age, maybe a year older, but not much, that would be able to fill in those gaps. Let's see who else… Patti Taylor, yeah. Her daughter – her son and daughter-in-law and another lady run Taylor Furniture.

EL: Okay.

MAR: She was a Lewis! Patty Lewis. Her husband was Milton Taylor, he was from Beaufort.

EL: Wow.

MAR: And he first – he had a grocery store, then when he married her, he set up that there—so Patty Taylor, she's of my age group. She would know about that neighborhood. 'Cause she was raised in that part beside Billy's Store, Patty was. Judy was raised at the west'ard. Now that area, beside – those two ladies would be good about filling – and if you ever want to call them, I can give you their phone number, or I can ask them would they be interested in doing something like that, to fill in the gaps that I wasn't here, things that little details.

EL: I'll be speaking with your sister-in-law, Miss Emma

MAR: Emma?

EL: Rose Guthrie.

MAR: Oh yeah! Emma, oh yes, she's not lost for words! Funny, funny, funny, that's Emma! Yeah. Oh, Emma. She's ninety? Ninety-one?

EL: Ninety-one is what she told me!

MAR: Ninety-one, still active with Bring Back the Lights, she's everywhere! [laughter] And their favorite thing to do is they'll go the first snow to the Cape in the boat, and sit there with your toboggan on and make a snowman! [laughter]

EL: [laughter]

MAR: Oh, she's something! I told—my joke now is, "When I grow up, I want to be like Aunt Emma!" [laughter]

EL: [laughter]

MAR: And I'm only about ten years behind her.

EL: Well that is amazing!

MAR: Mm-hmm.

EL: Thank you so much! I really appreciated this.

MAR: Okay! Well, I've enjoyed it, I've enjoyed it.

EL: Thank you!

MAR: Okay, we want to turn this off?

END OF INTERVIEW